

## INSTRUCTIONS: REGISTERED DENTAL ASSISTANT EXAMINATIONS (Rev. 4/02)

Applicants for Registered Dental Assistant licensure in California must pass both practical and written exams, and undergo a criminal history investigation, prior to receiving a license. Temporary permits cannot be issued, and licensure in another state or country is not recognized.

On and after July 1, 2002, each applicant for registered dental assistant licensure shall provide evidence of having successfully completed board-approved courses in radiation safety and coronal polishing before a license will be issued. While a copy of the radiation safety certificate is sufficient, the coronal polishing certification must be the original yellow card. Certifications of course completion may be submitted with the Application, or at a later date.

### GENERAL QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

To apply for examination and licensure, you must:

1. **Be a graduate of a Board-approved Registered Dental Assisting program; OR**
2. **Have 12 months satisfactory work experience** as a dental assistant for a dentist licensed in the U.S. by the date of application.

**Make checks out to COMDA; mail applications to COMDA, 1428 Howe Ave., Ste. 58, Sacramento, CA 95825.**

**FIRST-TIME APPLICANTS** First-time applicants must send the completed Application for RDA Examination and Licensure to the address above, **INCLUDING the fee of \$75** (which includes a \$20 application fee and \$55 practical exam fee. You must pay an additional \$50 written exam fee later to take the written test).

**OUT-OF-STATE APPLICANTS** In addition to the requirements for First-Time Applicants, applicants located outside of California must also submit, with the Application and fee, two completed fingerprint cards supplied by COMDA, and an additional fee of \$56 (a total fee of \$131).

**PREVIOUSLY-QUALIFIED APPLICANTS** If you took the written or practical exam within the last 2 years, you must submit completed Application for RDA Examination and Licensure to COMDA, checking one of the following boxes at the top of the Application, depending on which exam you wish to take. The Application **MUST** be accompanied by fees as follows:

- Fee \$55 - Re-exam – practical only
- Re-exam – written only (you must pay an additional \$50 written exam fee later to take the written exam)

**If it has been more than 2 years since you last took either exam, you must re-apply for both exams as a First-Time Applicant, even if you passed one of the exams in the past.**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** A correctly completed application, all required documents, and correct fees must be filed **TOGETHER** with COMDA by the published final filing date, or your application will be rejected, and you will not be scheduled for examination.

**REFUND OF FEES: The \$20 application fee is non-refundable.** If you pay a fingerprint fee, that fee is also non-refundable.

If your application is rejected for any reason, only the exam fees will be refunded, which will occur about 8-10 weeks after the last exam.

You may only withdraw from the exam by sending a written request to COMDA. This request must be received in the office 15 business days prior to the first day of the scheduled exam. Only your exam fee will be refunded, not your application and fingerprint fees.

None of your fees will be refunded if you do not appear at your assigned examination. You must re-apply for a later exam and again pay the required exam fee(s).

A fee will be charged for all returned checks.

**WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I APPLY?** If you are not qualified, your application will be returned to you, and your exam fees refunded.

If you are qualified, you will be sent a letter advising you of how to schedule your written exam (if you applied for that exam), and the steps you must take to be fingerprinted (if you are a First-Time Applicant.) You will also be provided more detailed information about the content of the exams at that time.

Later, you will be sent a letter scheduling you for the Practical Exam (if you applied for that exam).

### **First-Time Applicant Checklist - Did you remember to:**

- à Complete all sections of the Application, and sign and date the Application?
- à Enclose a copy of your diploma, or have your school certify program completion on page 2, or  
Enclose original signed certifications (page 2 of the Application) from licensed dentists of at least 12 months experience?
- à Enclose your signed check or money order?
- à Send the Application to COMDA with the required fee?
- à Enclose completed postcard and affix postage stamp?

## **COMPLETING THE APPLICATIONS**

Many applications are rejected because they are completed incorrectly - read all of the materials sent to you and complete ALL parts of the Application fully, truthfully, and accurately.

**Top Section** - You must check one box to indicate the filing status of your Application.

### **1. First-Time Applicants**

If you have never applied before, or if you have not taken either of the exams during the last 2 years, you must apply as a First-Time Applicant, even if you previously passed one of the exams.

Check the box under the First-Time Applicant section.

### **2. Previously-Qualified Applicants**

If you have qualified for and taken one of the exams during the last two years, you must apply as a Previously-Qualified Applicant.

Check the appropriate box under the Previously-Qualified Applicant Only section for the exam or exams that you wish to take

## **3. Practical Exam Date and Location**

**All applicants applying for the practical exam must write in the month and check the location of where they wish to take the practical exam. (refer to pink form sent with application for exam location and date)**

**Sections 1 through 6** - You must provide all of the information requested. Be sure to clearly print or type.

**Section 7** - If you have not taken either of the exams during the last 2 years, you must apply as a First-Time Applicant; therefore, skip Section 7, but complete ALL other parts of the Application, including Section 1 through 6 and Sections 8 through 14.

If you qualify for re-examination because you have taken one of the exams during the last 2 years, fully complete Section 7, then answer Sections 11 through 14. You do not need to complete Sections 8 through 10 since you have already qualified for examination in the past.

**Section 8** - Check the box that indicates the method by which you are qualifying. Be sure to continue on to the following pages to complete the Application.

**Section 9** - If you qualify by graduation from a Board-approved dental assisting program, you must either provide a copy of your diploma/certificate, OR you must have Section 9 completed, signed, **and** sealed by the school dean or other authorized school officer.  
If you have not graduated by the final filing date, but your

school expects you to complete 30 working days or more before the first published practical examination date, the school may certify on the Application that you will complete by a specified date.

**However, you must also make sure that the school also certifies, not less than 30 working days before the first published practical exam date, that you did in fact successfully complete.**

If COMDA does not receive proof of actual completion and graduation by this date, you will **not** be allowed to take the exams and you will have to re-apply as a First-Time Applicant during a later exam cycle.

**Section 10** - If you are qualifying by work experience, certification that you have 12 months of experience as a dental assistant with a dentist licensed in the United States must be supplied by obtaining the signature of EACH employer. The entire 12 months must be obtained prior to the date of application.

The 12 months of experience, will be considered qualifying **only** if the experience was comprised of performing duties specified in California Dental Board Regulation Section 1085 (b) and/or (c) during a majority of the experience hours (see pages 3 and 4).

This page of the Application can be photocopied if you need additional copies. However, all certifications must contain original signatures and be submitted with your Application. Be sure that all parts of Section 10 are completed accurately by the employing dentist.

**Questions 11 through 13** - Each question must be truthfully answered and, when directed, a full explanation provided in the space on the back of the Application under Section 15. Details. Making a false statement is grounds to deny your license.

**Section 14** - You must carefully read, date, and sign the Application.

## **SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS**

If your religious beliefs preclude you from being examined on Saturday or Sunday, you must staple a note to the Application stating the day on which you cannot take the exam and the reason why.

If you have a disability and may require special accommodations, call COMDA to request the special forms necessary. Completed special accommodation forms **MUST** be submitted **WITH** your Application.

It is not possible to make special arrangements for certain applicants to be scheduled together.

## **GENERAL NATURE OF THE EXAMINATIONS**

**The written exam** is a 3-hour, computer based, multiple-choice exam. It is administered in a computerized test

center at various sites in California. If you qualify and your Application is accepted, you will be sent information about how to register for the exam.

**The practical exam** requires that you acceptably perform designated procedures to minimum competence on a typodont. The exam is approximately 5 hours from start to finish. You will be assigned to either a morning or afternoon session, on Saturday or Sunday, at a location in Northern or Southern California nearest to you.

**Once your Application has been accepted, you will be sent specific information concerning the content of the examinations. Be sure to read it carefully.**

**California Law Effective July 1, 2002:**

**Section 1753.5**

**On and after July 1, 2002, each applicant for registered dental assistant licensure shall provide evidence of having successfully completed board-approved courses in radiation safety and coronal polishing as a condition of licensure.**

**Allowable DA and RDA Duties**

**IT IS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE TO PRACTICE AS A REGISTERED DENTAL ASSISTANT WITHOUT FIRST RECEIVING A LICENSE.**

Therefore, be sure to become familiar with the duties that the various categories of auxiliaries are allowed to perform in California, as contained in the following laws and regulations.

**Section 1068. Posting of Dental Auxiliaries Duties.** All dentists utilizing the services of dental auxiliaries shall post a notice in a common area of the office which delineates duties and functions deemed by the board as delegable within stipulated settings and/or circumstances. Such notice shall be readily accessible to all individuals under supervision of the dentist.

**Section 1067. Definitions.** As used in this subchapter:

(a) "Dental auxiliary" means a person who may perform dental supportive procedures authorized by the provisions of these regulations under the specified supervision of a licensed dentist.

(b) "Dental assistant" means an unlicensed person who may perform basic supportive dental procedures specified by these regulations under the supervision of a licensed dentist.

(c) "Registered dental assistant" or "RDA" means a licensed person who may perform all procedures authorized by the provisions of these regulations and in addition may perform all functions which may be performed by a dental assistant under the designated supervision of a licensed dentist.

(d) "Registered dental hygienist" or "RDH" means a licensed person who may perform all procedures authorized by the provisions of these regulations and in addition may perform all functions which may be performed by a dental assistant and registered dental assistant, under the designated supervision of a licensed dentist.

(e) "Registered dental assistant in extended functions" or "RDAEF" means a person licensed as a registered dental assistant who has completed post-licensure clinical and didactic training approved by the board and satisfactorily performed on an examination designated by the board for registered dental assistant in extended function applicants.

(f) "Registered dental hygienist in extended functions" or "RDHEF" means a person licensed as a registered dental hygienist who has completed post-licensure clinical and didactic training approved by the board and satisfactorily performed on an examination designated by the board for registered dental hygienist in extended function applicants.

(g) "Oral prophylaxis" means the preventive dental procedures including complete removal of explorer-detectable calculus, soft deposits, plaque, stains, and the smoothing of unattached tooth surfaces. The objective of this treatment shall be creation of an environment in which hard and soft tissues can be maintained in good health by the patient.

(h) "Coronal polishing" means a procedure limited to the removal of plaque and stain from exposed tooth surfaces, utilizing an appropriate rotary instrument with rubber cap or brush and a polishing agent.

(i) "Direct supervision" means supervision of dental procedures based on instructions given by a licensed dentist who must be physically present in the treatment facility during performance of those procedures.

(j) "General supervision" means supervision of dental procedures based on instructions given by a licensed dentist, but not requiring the physical presence of the supervising dentist during the performance of those procedures.

**Section 1085. Dental Assistant Duties and Settings.**

(a) Unless specifically so provided by regulation, a dental assistant may not perform the following functions or any other activity which represents the practice of dentistry or requires the knowledge, skill and training of a licensed dentist:

1. Diagnosis and treatment planning.
2. Surgical or cutting procedures on hard or soft tissue.
3. Fitting and adjusting of correctional and prosthodontic appliances.
4. Prescription of medicines.
5. Placement, condensation, carving or removal of permanent restorations, including final cementation procedures.
6. Irrigation and medication of canals, try-in cones, reaming, filing or filling of root canals.
7. Taking of impressions for prosthodontic appliances, bridges or any other structures which may be worn in the mouth.

8. Administration of injectable and/or general anesthesia.
9. Oral prophylaxis procedures.

(b) A dental assistant may perform such basic supportive dental procedures as the following under the general supervision of a licensed dentist:

1. Extra-oral duties or functions specified by the supervising dentist.
2. Operating dental radiographic equipment for the purpose of oral radiography if the dental assistant has complied with the requirements of Section 1656 of the Business and Professions Code.
3. Examine orthodontic appliances.

(c) A dental assistant may perform such basic supportive dental procedures as the following under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist when done so pursuant to the order, control and full professional responsibility of the supervising dentist. Such procedures shall be checked and approved by the supervising dentist prior to dismissal of the patient from the office of said dentist.

1. Take impressions for diagnostic and opposing models, bleaching trays, temporary crowns and bridges, and sports guards;
2. Apply non-aerosol and non-caustic topical agents;
3. Remove post-extraction and periodontal dressings;
4. Place elastic orthodontic separators;
5. Remove orthodontic separators;
6. Assist in the administration of nitrous oxide, when used as an analgesia or sedation, but shall not start the administration of the gases and shall not adjust the flow of the gases unless instructed to do so by the dentist who shall be present at the patient's chairside at the implementation of these instructions. This regulation shall not be construed to prevent any person from taking appropriate action in the event of a medical emergency;
7. Hold anterior matrices;
8. Remove sutures;
9. Take intra-oral measurements for orthodontic procedures;
10. Seat adjusted retainers or headgears, including appropriate instructions;
11. Check for loose bands;
12. Remove arch wires;
13. Remove ligature ties;
14. Apply topical fluoride, after scaling and polishing by the supervising dentist or a registered dental hygienist;
15. Place and remove rubber dams;
16. Place, wedge and remove matrices.
17. Cure restorative or orthodontic materials in operative site with light-curing device.

#### **Section 1086. RDA Duties and Settings.**

(a) Unless specifically so provided by regulation, the prohibitions contained in Section 1085 of these regulations apply to registered dental assistants.

(b) A registered dental assistant may perform all functions which may be performed by a dental assistant.

(c) Under general supervision, a registered dental assistant may perform the following duties:

1. Mouth-mirror inspection of the oral cavity, to include charting of obvious lesions, existing restorations and missing

teeth;

2. Placement and removal of temporary sedative dressings.

(d) A registered dental assistant may perform the following procedures under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist when done so pursuant to the order, control and full professional responsibility of the supervising dentist. Such procedures shall be checked and approved by the supervising dentist prior to dismissal of the patient from the office of said dentist.

1. Obtain endodontic cultures;
2. Dry canals, previously opened by the supervising dentist, with absorbent points;
3. Test pulp vitality;
4. Place bases and liners on sound dentin;
5. Remove excess cement from supragingival surfaces of teeth with a hand instrument or floss;
6. Size stainless steel crowns, temporary crowns and bands;
7. Fabrication of temporary crowns intra-orally;
8. Temporary cementation and removal of temporary crowns

and removal of orthodontic bands;

9. Placement of orthodontic separators;
10. Placement and ligation of arch wires;
11. Placement of post-extraction and periodontal dressings;
12. Apply bleaching agents;
13. Activate bleaching agents with non-laser light-curing device.
14. Take bite registrations for diagnostic models for case study only.

15. Coronal Polishing (Evidence of satisfactory completion of a board-approved course of instruction in this function must be submitted to the Board prior to any performance thereof.) This procedure shall not be intended or interpreted as a complete oral prophylaxis (a procedure which can be performed only by a licensed dentist or registered dental hygienist). A licensed dentist or registered dental hygienist shall determine that the teeth to be polished are free of calculus or other extraneous material prior to coronal polishing.

16. Removal of excess cement from coronal surfaces of teeth under orthodontic treatment by means of an ultrasonic scaler. (Evidence of satisfactory completion of a board-approved course of instruction in an approved RDA program in this function must be submitted to the Board prior to any performance thereof.)

**IMPORTANT NOTE: Passing the RDA examinations does not allow you to use an ultrasonic scaler.**

**You must FIRST satisfactorily complete a course approved by the Dental Board of California in this function, and provide certification of having done so to COMDA.**

**Performance without proper certification is a violation of the California Dental Practice Act.**